Death Mother: A Reaper's Child

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Rukia has been assigned a new mission...She must protect the new Master of Death from harm, at all costs. But she's got no issue with this mission. After all, she does absolutely adore her adopted child... [[Eventual HarryxYachiru]]

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Chapter 1

With a final swing from her Zanpakuto, the Hollow Rukia Kuchiki had been facing off against faded away. Sighing with relief, the black-haired young woman sheathed her blade.

"Why are so many Hollows appearing in this place...?" She mused silently. Then, she heard a noise. It sounded like a soft whimper... The soul reaper looked around, seeing no more Hollows in sight. Maybe it was the soul they were after...? She decided to take a look, and peeked over the fence of the house she had heard the whimper come from...

There was a small, living child working in the garden...and his left arm was bent at an odd angle. Rukia's eyes widened, and she let out a soft gasp. The child was too absorbed in his work and injury to hear her. Rukia stared down at him in shock for a few moments, then blinked.

"He's...adorable..." She mused under her breath. She wondered how he got so hurt...Maybe he fell down some stairs? Yes, that had to be it. With a small smile, the soul reaper turned and left.

Harry looked up from his weeding, still grimacing from the intense pain in his arm, then looked through the wide hole in the fence he was usually told to stay away from to avoid being seen... and he saw a black-haired woman in a long, black robe walking away from him. With a small gasp, he moved away from the hole. He prayed that she hadn't seen him...

Suddenly, the door was thrown open, and Harry's obese uncle stormed out.

"Boy...in here now." He gave Harry no time to react as he grabbed him and dragged him inside. Harry whimpered, and almost wished

the woman had seen him. Vernon pulled him inside and slammed the door.

Rukia vaguely heard the sounds of yelling coming from the house...She had a bad feeling... Perhaps one of the children in that house had acted up one too many times? Not thinking too much of it, the woman stepped through the portal to the soul society, her mission complete.

The next day...

Rukia finished off her fifteenth hollow of the day, and wiped the sweat from her brow. So many hollows in this area... She heard the sound of movement coming from the same house she had inspected yesterday. Was the child there again? Curious, she peeked through the hole she noticed in the fence, and saw him with his back to her, pulling weeds.

His arm was bent even further, his tiny body was matted with cuts and bruises, and he was covered with dried blood.

Rukia's eyes widened, and she clasped a hand over her mouth to stifle her gasp. This was not the result of falling down a flight of stairs...Someone had intentionally harmed this poor child. Since he clearly hadn't had any medical attention, she had a strong feeling his parents or guardians were the ones responsible. She looked at the child sadly. He was a living being...There was nothing she could do for him... Wordlessly, she turned and left.

Harry looked up from his work to see the woman from the day prior leaving again. Silently, he reached out for her with one hand, desperately, but silently, begging for help. He quickly retracted his hand and shook his head. He couldn't ask for help...Uncle Vernon would...kill him...

With a small sniffle, he silently returned to his work.

The door opened. Harry braced himself for another beating...

The next day

Rukia rested her hands on her knees, panting heavily. Why was she the only one sent out to clear out this ridiculous amount of hollows?! Shaking her head, she decided to take a look through the hole in the fence once more. Sure enough, the child was there. His injuries from the day before had gotten even worse, and to make matters worse, his face was swollen. Rukia trembled and teared up slightly. "You poor little boy..." She whispered, before standing. She wanted to get out of here and forget about it...She opened the portal to the Soul Society, and moved to step inside...but not before taking one last look at the child in the garden.

...He was looking right back at her.

Rukia's eyes widened in shock, then she shook her head. It had to be a coincidence... Then, she saw his lips move. He was whispering something, but she could make out what he was saying by reading his lips.

"Please don't leave me..."

Rukia turned around...but the portal pulled her in. Before she knew it, she was at the gate in the soul society. She clenched her fists at her failure to help him, then remembered the look on his face.

"...He could see me..."

"Who could see you?" Rukia snapped her head in the direction of the voice.

"Captain Ukitake!" She exclaimed.

"Hello, Rukia. The mission went well, I hope."

"Yes sir..." Rukia replied listlessly.

"What's wrong, Rukia? Something's troubling you." Rukia looked at her captain.

"...There was a child...In the world of the living...He could see me..."

"Hmm...I see...And what did this child look like?"

"Well...It was hard to tell...He was always too injured to get a good look at what he looks like..."

"Hmm...He was near the area where the hollows appear?"

"Yes...I've noticed they only seem to appear when he's outside..." Ukitake adopted a worried facial expression.

"It's as we feared..." Rukia blinked.

"What? What do you mean?" Her captain gave her a serious look.

"...Please follow me." Rukia was concerned as she obeyed her captain's orders.

They had been walking for several minutes.

"...Captain, can I ask where we're going?"

"All in good time, Rukia..." She nodded and continued to follow. She was surprised when her captain led her to the first division quarters. Even more so when he led her to Yamamoto's office. Jushiro lightly knocked on the door.

"Enter." Ukiatake turned the doorknob, and he and Rukia entered the room. The head captain was sitting at his desk. "Hello, captain Ukitake. Rukia. Captain Ukitake, I trust you've come bearing more news on the matter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Um...Sirs? I...hate to speak out of line, but...can one of you please explain what's happening?"

"Of course, child." Yamamoto replied calmly. "...You see, we believe we've found the new master of death."

"...Master of death?" Rukia asked in confusion.

"The master of death is someone the original soul reaper himself bowed down to. Someone most soul reapers respect." Ukitake explained.

"But...can I ask why? What makes them more special than the other living people?"

"Well, child..." Yamamoto began. "Before he ascended to become the spirit king, the original soul reaper met three brothers who lived, even though they were supposed to die. These brothers had with them three very powerful artifacts... The Elder Wand, an immensely powerful magic wand that is considered undefeatable. The Resurrection Stone, a stone that can revive souls from the dead. And the Cloak of Invisibility, a cloak that renders the wearer completely invisible. These brothers all had extraordinarily high spirit energy. The original soul reaper had been struggling with his duties as a soul reaper for a very long time, as there were so many souls in the world, far too many for one reaper to take care of on his own. So, he enlisted the aid of these three brothers, who readily agreed, as they were a generous lot. These brothers were no ordinary living, you see...Hiding amongst the normal living is an entire community of magic users known as wizards. With their high spiritual pressure, and mastery of magic, they were invaluable assets to the original reaper. But that's not all the brothers did for the original reaper. The Resurrection Stone had a rather unique side effect...those that it brought back from the dead attained vast amounts of spiritual pressure comparable to that of the brothers themselves. The resurrected people were then trained by the original reaper so that they may have more assistance in carrying out the reaper's work. The original reaper was very grateful to the brothers for all they had done to help him, and vowed one day to repay their kind deeds. Eventually, nature took its course, and the brothers succumbed to old age, one after the other. As the youngest died, he made a

request: keep his bloodline safe from harm, and ensure that the three items of death fall into the hands of a member of his bloodline so that they would not fall into the wrong hands. Unfortunately, the brothers had no truly close relatives to speak of. Many years went by, and no soul reaper was able to find anyone related to the brothers. All we had to go by was the youngest's last words: "When my bloodline has reached its breaking point, and no longer sees any purpose in life, the hollows are attracted..." ...So you see, Rukia...We believe that a child in the area you've been facing the hollows in is distantly related to the brothers. We must be sure, so we can ensure that he is well cared for. If the hollows are appearing as frequently as you report...I shudder to imagine what pains that poor child must be suffering."

Rukia clenched her fists. So the little boy...He had been physically tormented to the point of questioning why he was still living?

"...Let me save him..."

"Pardon me?" Yamamoto asked with a raised brow.

"I believe Rukia has seen the child, head captain." Ukitake threw his two cents in.

"Is that a fact?"

"It is." Rukia said. "I HAVE seen him...He's being abused, I just know it. He's been working in the yard every time I've seen him, and he's always badly injured...Either his guardians did it to him themselves, or he's getting bullied and attacked, and they just don't care and are ignoring him. I can't stand that this is happening to him. Please, sir...Let me save him..."

Yamamoto's gaze hardened. "The master of death...an abused child...Who would have ever imagined... Yes, Rukia...I will give you the mission of saving the poor boy...By any means necesarry."

"...Thank you, sir."

"Now, then...Here is the plan. First, you must prepare your gigai. As soon as you've rescued the child, contact me. I will send in Unohana's squad for medical purposes, at which point you will get into your gigai. After that is finished, you will send Unohana on her way, and we will send Captain Zaraki-"

"Um...Sir? Why Captain Zaraki for something this...delicate?" Rukia asked. Seriously, Kenpachi coming to help her deal with an abused child?

"Because of Yachiru." Ukitake explained. "He is a child, so we feel it would help his emotional recovery along if he had someone his own age to interact with." Rukia still didn't know how she felt about them saddling her with Kenpachi...

"Correct." Yamamoto nodded. "Then Kenpachi and Yachiru will lead you to a safe spot. A very recently abandoned home in the living world. We have decided that the best way to go about this is to have the child under the care of one of us...However, he cannot be raised in the Soul Society. If a living child stays in the Soul Society for too long, their soul will be slowly and painfully extracted from their body, and that will not benefit his mental state. Under those circumstances, we have come to the conclusion that someone will have to remain in the world of the living, to care for the child and ensure that he recovers. Since you volunteered to take the mission...that responsibility is yours."

"I understand, sir." Rukia replied. She really had no problem with it at all.

"However, Captain Zaraki and his lieutenant will have to stay with you, in case anything should go wrong."

"I...understand, sir..."

"Very good. Now you'd best be off. That child's future depends on you."

"I won't fail, sir!" And with those words, Rukia turned and ran from the office.

"...Head captain, let me assure you...There is no one better for this job than Rukia."

"I hope you're right, Ukitake...For the child's sake, I hope you're right..."

Rukia ran as fast as she could to get to the world of the living. And she wasn't going to stop running until she was back in that child's yard...

Yeah, it's probably full of plotholes, but...I tried my best.

Chapter 2

Rukia stopped running for a moment as she came out to the portal to the world of the living. She rested her hands on her knees momentarily, panting heavily. After a few moments, she shook her head and stood tall, then took off running again. This was no time to rest. The child needed her...

Without hesitation, she ran through the portal and back into the world of the living.

A Japanese style sliding door appeared near the Dursley's back yard. As soon as it appeared, it opened and Rukia ran out of it and towards the familiar house where she saw the little boy she was entrusted to save...

Meanwhile...

Harry was curled up in a ball outside. He knew he was supposed to be doing chores...but he couldn't move. Vernon had dragged him inside mid-day, frustrated by a cricket game, and beat him early, promising the nightly beating would still happen later that night. Harry whimpered softly and buried his face in his hands, wishing that pretty black-haired woman would come back.

He didn't notice that she was currently running in his direction...

She stopped about one and a half meters from him with worry written clearly in her face. "I'm coming, little guy!" Rukia exclaimed, catching Harry's attention and causing him to turn back quickly with wide eyes.

Harry's eyes widened and filled with glee at seeing the pretty black haired women that he'd been seeing for the past few days.

"Y-You came back..." He said softly as she reached him and knelt down by his side. Rukia slowly wrapped her arms around the little

boy, and pulled him into a tight embrace.

Harry smiled and leaned closer into the hug. It felt...good to experience physical contact that brought no pain with it.

Rukia smiled as the small child finally relaxed in her arms. Now that she was holding Harry, she could take a closer look at him. What she saw appalled her. There were bruises covering jis entire body. Old cuts crisscrossed his arms and possibly his back if the stains on the shirt were anything to go by. Gods above, what had they done to this child? Rukia could barely keep from crying as she saw fresh cuts and what looked suspiciously like burn marks and puncture wounds.

And that was just his arms! Rukia shuddered to imagine what other horrors awaited underneath that oversized t-shirt...

Her comfort-session was interrupted when the door to the house was thrown open. She turned to see the oversized walrus stomping out of the house, making his way over to Harry.

The shock of seeing such injuries inflicted on a little boy had paralyzed Rukia to the spot. As such, she was numb to the world as Vernon yanked Harry away from her and stormed back off to the house.

"Slacking off, boy?! I'll show you!" Rukia quickly rose to her feet, and froze to the spot when she saw the terrified child, desperately reaching towards her with both arms, his eyes pleading for her to save him. She was rooted to the spot as Vernon slammed the door shut, taking Harry into the house.

Rukia shook off her shock. "Damn it, why did I have to freeze up like that?!" Rukia questioned herself, stomach churning with guilt and shame for not helping Harry right then and there when he needed it. She dashed towards the backdoor and turned the knob. Luckily the fat bastard forgot to lock it, so she was able to gain quick access to the kitchen.

Rukia snapped her head back and forth, trying to find where the walrus had taken Harry. Then she heard it. She ran in the direction she heard the sounds of yelling and whimpering. When she got in the room, she was just in time to see Vernon standing over Harry with a...a wooden board with rusty nails sticking out of it...And it was clear that it was used on the child more than once...

"A few more couldn't hurt, eh freak?" Vernon sneered. He raised the board again...

Vernon was about to bring the board down...when something hit him on the head hard, knocking him flat on his back. He looked up...and saw that a wooden baseball bat, one of his favourite Harry beating tools, was floating in the air. He growled with rage, and turned to Harry, who had just fallen into the tender embrace of unconsciousness.

"THIS IS YOUR DOING, YOU UNGRATEFUL LITTLE-" He had no time to finish, as the baseball bat came down hard on his cranium once more. And again. And again. Vernon went from enraged to terrified, as the bat showed no signs of letting up. "St-top...Please...stop..." Vernon's whimpers sounded out weakly.

Rukia scowled at the man. "How many times do you think the child asked YOU to stop when you were beating him, you son of a BITCH?!" And with those words, she slammed the bat down on Vernon's head as hard as she could. The man went still, and ceased moving. Rukia panted heavily. It was over. She turned to the unconscious child and slowly approached. She did learn some healing techniques during her time on the force, but to use them, she was going to have to take the t-shirt off...

The moment the shirt was off, Rukia found herself staring into the depths of hell.

There wasn't a single inch of skin that wasn't covered in some sort of injury. Blood everywhere, much of it clotted and scabbed. Bruises and scrapes and cuts... Third degree burns and holes as far as the

eye could see...Some wounds that had been long infected... A large patch of skin on his shoulder had been stripped away to reveal raw muscle...And she swore she could see a little bit of bone sticking out from his leg...

Rukia clasped her hand over her mouth and tried not to vomit at the sight of those injuries. She shook her head and uncovered her mouth to place both of her hands over his leg to heal the injury caused by the bone that is poking out of his skin. Her hands glowed green as the healing process began, with Rukia praying for the injuries that were plaguing the poor child to heal up and be gone forever.

Her spiritual energy wasn't enough, however... She was barely making a dent in the horrific injuries... She didn't want to wait...But she needed a trained healer. All she could do was contact Captain Yamamoto, and have him send in Unohana...

She quickly got in touch with the Head Captain and explained the situation.

"I see." Yamamoto said through the phone. "I will have Captain Unohana over as fast as possible. Make sure that the young man stays safe in the mean time."

"Yes sir Head Captian, and thank you." Rukia said then hung up, looking at Harry in worry. 'Don't you worry, sweetie... After Unohana gets here and heals you up, you won't have to worry ever again.' Rukia pledged mentally as she waited for the Squad 4 Captain to arrive.

She teared up looking at the unconscious child. She tentatively reached out and traced the wounds. Oh God...They were awful...She felt bile rising into her throat, and barely managed to choke it down. Right now, all she wanted to do was scoop the little boy into her arms, hold him tightly and never let go... "It'll be okay...It'll be okay..." She whispered softly, more to herself than that child.

15 minutes later...

Captain Unohana barged into the house in her gigai, dragging Rukia's gigai in behind her. "Rukia, get in the Gigai, I will take care of the boy." Rukia nodded numbly as she headed for the Gigai.

Unohana made her way to where the poor boy lay."ok, lets get you...Oh my god. What happened to you?" The powerful Soul Reaper fell to her knees as she beheld the injured boy. She was in shock and disbelief. How was this boy still alive? She quickly got to work, chanting healing Kido under her breath to accelerate the process. "Rukia! Get over here, I need your energy to heal him!

Rukia didn't waste a moment, running to the older woman's side. The process was underway five minutes later.

"...I can't believe they would do this..." Unohana mumbled.

"Yes...It seems more like something Mayuri would do..." Rukia joked half-heartedly.

"...He shouldn't be alive...No normal child, even a master of death, could survive injuries like this." Rukia felt her heart sink into the depths of her stomach. Oh God...He needed a hug so bad...She decided it was her full intention to give him one as soon as he woke up...

"Vernon? Is everything alright? I heard a crash" Petunia rounded the corner and screamed as she saw her husband unconscious on the floor and two strange women crouching over that freak. "Who- Who are you and what are you doing in my house? Did you do this to my husband? GET OUT! OUT I SAY!"

Rukai looked over at the commotion and her jaw dropped. There was a horse talking to her! Then she realized that it was Harry's aunt. She got to her feet and shouted. "BAKUDO 99! PALE FIRE CRASH!" Petunia screamed as flames came from now where and chased her up the stairs.

Unohana glared at the retreating woman, and sighed, then rose to her feet. "The head captain requested that I return when the child was healed...The rest is up to you, Kenpachi and Yachuri." Rukia nodded. Unohana knelt down and placed a hand on her shoulder. "...Good luck, Rukia."

After the older woman left, Rukia knelt down beside the little boy. He seemed to notice the absence of his wounds, as his face had grown slightly more at ease. She smiled, relieved that the physical pain was gone. But she knew for an absolute fact that the mental scars would be there for a very long time... Gently, she reached over, grabbed the little boy, and scooped him into her arms, cradling him close against her chest.

'...He's so cute...How can you abuse anyone with such a sweet little face?' The soul reaper thought sadly as she ran her fingers through his hair. '...I'll do whatever I can to help him fully recover from this...I swear it...' The little boy snuggled closer into her chest, and for the first time she had ever seen, he smiled contently.

She smiled as she noticed that he was smiling. "He's so adorable..." Rukia couldn't help but voice. Before she could say anything else, she was startled when she heard the front door being kicked down.

"See Kenny, I knew where we were going." Said a voice, which Rukia recognized as Yachiru.

She heard a scoff. "Yeah, this time it only took ya seven tries this time... HEY, RUKIA! WHERE THE HELL ARE YA?!"

"I'm in here..." Rukia called out softly.

Yachiru flew into the room, a bundle of pure energy. Oooh! This place is so clean! Are we getting to play here Kenny? Oh, Hiya Rukia. Is that the lord of death? KAWAII! HE'S SO CUTE!

Rukia put a hand over the little girls's mouth. This didn't hinder her chatter, as she continued talking, her voice muffled by the hand.

"Can you two keep it down?!" She whispered harshly. "He's been through a terrible ordeal, and right now, he needs his rest." Kenpachi chuckled.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah..." He looked around the house. "...Fancy lookin' place these b*** have. That looks like an expensive vase." He casually knocked the vase to the floor with a swipe of his hand. "Aaaand now it's an expensive pile of glass shards."

Yachiru had finally stopped talking, and Rukia felt she could take her hand off of her mouth. She approached her side, and looked at Harry.

"...So...can I play with him when he wakes up?" Rukia smiled sadly.

"I don't think he'll be ready to play with anyone for quite a while after what he's been through." She replied.

"Oh..." Yachiru said simply. "...They really beat him up a lot, didn't they?"

"Yes...They did." Rukia glared at Vernon once more.

"...Why? I don't get it." Yachiru rested her little chin on her hands, looking at Vernon as well.

"Because they're terrible people. That's why." Rukia said simply as she moved a stray lock of hair out of Harry's face. "He's going to be so scared and confused..."

"Can I help make him feel better?" Rukia looked at the little girl, who was smiling brightly at her. "Pleeeeease?"

"...Yes." Rukia nodded with a smile. "I would really appreciate that."

"Yaaay!" Yachiru cheered. The two girls smiled at Harry while Kenpachi gleefully destroyed the Dursley's possessions in the background.

Kenpachi finally stopped to see what the girls were cooing over. When he saw what had been done to the boy through the spiritual scarring, and saw he was still alive, he grinned. This one shows promise. Kenpachi smirked as he kneeled down to inspect the boy.

"Well, the kid can definitely take one hell of a nasty beating, eh?" Rukia glared at him.

"Don't say that like it's a good thing." She snapped. "He never should have experienced that living hell, I don't care how much he can take!"

"Easy there, Rukia." Kenpachi chuckled. "I'm just saying, the kid's got potential...His spirit energy's off the charts!"

"You're not gonna fight him, are you, Kenny? I mean, I don't think you like fighting kids..." Yachiru said uneasily.

"Nah, I'm not gonna challenge him to a straight fight...Yet. But maybe I can teach him a thing or two about self defense..." He grinned widely at the thought of training up himself a potential challenge for the future.

Yachiru pouted. "Don't be mean to him Kenny!"

KA-CHCK! They all froze at the sound of a gun being cocked and slowly turned to see a beaten Vernon standing with a shotgun pointed at them and the Human Horse standing behind him.

Kenpachi raised his brow, then grinned maniacally at the large man. He threw back his head and let loose with an amused laugh.

"That's just cute." He chuckled, shaking his head in amusement. "You kids stay back. I'll show him." The spiky-headed soul reaper began a slow, steady approach towards the obese man and his wife.

"N-Now see here, you f-freak! I won't stand for having my h-house broken into!"

"Ah, shut up and die already. I'd rather not waste more time than I have to beating the ever-loving crap out of you." Vernon knew that this man would gladly murder him if he got his hands on him. In a moment of panic, he pulled the trigger. The bullet connected perfectly on the man's chest...but it seemed to have very little effect, splatter of blood aside. "That's all ya got? Feels like a bee stung me." Vernon was now terrified. He quickly loaded another shot and fired at the man's leg. Another splatter of blood...but Kenpachi didn't slow down.

"KEEP SHOOTING, VERNON!" Petunia shrieked. But he never got the chance, as Kenpachi had finally reached them, yanked the gun from the fat man's hand, and tossed it off to the side. Then, he wrapped his fingers around the chubby man's throat and glared into his eyes with a sadistic smile.

"Walrus...This is gonna be BAD."

Petunia wailed and tried to pull the maniac off of Vernon. "Get off of him you maniac!" She grabbed the gun and unloaded both barrels to his face.

"Was that supposed to do something?"

"Dear god,what are you?"

Kenpachi grinned once more, the blood covering his face making him look downright demonic.

"Your worst nightmare." And with that, he casually flung Vernon forward, causing him to sail through several walls and outside in the backyard.

Petunia gaped at what had just happened to her husband, and could only watch in horror as Kenpachi turned to her with the same crazed glint in his eyes.

"Who's next?"

Petunia screamed and ran out the front door, babbling about crazy samurai in her house. Kenpachi looked in the direction she ran, looking as if he was going to go after her.

"Kenpachi, stop it!" snapped Rukia, cradling the child in her arms. "We need to get to the safe house."

If Kenpachi could look crestfallen, he just did. "Fine, the horse can live."

Rukia started as she felt Harry stir in her arms. Blearily opening his eyes, he realized that the pain was gone. Looking up he saw the girl from the garden. Oh no! Harry was really in for a beating when is uncle found out!

"Yaaaaay! He's awake!" Yachiru cheered happily.

"Great." Kenpachi grunted, still sulking over the lost prey.

Harry was trembling in Rukia's arms, looking at the three strange people around him. The woman holding him was nice, he knew that. But there were two people he'd never seen before. A girl around his age and a scary man with a sword? Still scared, he looked over and saw Vernon's unconscious body.

"Oh no! Uncle Vernon's gonna kill me! This is my fault, I know it!"

Kenpachi rolled his eyes, and Yachiru looked confused.

Rukia was just as confused, but the sight of Harry in fear awakened some maternal instinct in her. She hesitantly pulled Harry into a more comfortable embrace, and began softly shushing him and cooing.

"Shhhh...It's okay. He won't hurt you anymore..." She whispered softly. Gradually, Harry calmed down. He wasn't being hurt? Vernon wasn't waking up and yanking him out of the woman's arms to give him the beating he so rightfully deserved? Harry looked up at Rukia, with big, adorable confused eyes.

"Wh-What's happening?"

"KAWAII!" Yachiru popped her head over Rukia's shoulder, stars in her eyes as she beheld the confused child.

"Shush Yachiru! You're scaring him!" Rukia looked at the poor child. "We are here to get you out of this horrid place. How would you like that?"

Harry was shocked. They wanted...to take him away from the Dursleys? Away from the beatings and endless list of chores?

Wait...what if they were even worse? What if they hit him, and called him names, and-

Harry's thoughts were interrupted by the look in the woman's eyes. All he saw in them was pure compassion. She wanted to help him...She truly did... He hesitated for a moment, then nodded.

"Y-Yes p-please... I'd like that...a lot..." He buried his face in the woman's chest, and felt a wave of calm wash over him. He felt...safe.

"Rukia? Why are you crying?" Rukia looked up in confusion at the pink haired girl's question. Crying? She felt her cheeks and realized that they were wet. "I- I don't know."

"Oh for the love of peace, can we just please just get to the damned Safe House?"

Rukia nodded and got up, carrying the small child in a tight embrace. She was never letting him go.

Rukia could feel Harry snuggling into her shoulder and she smiled lightly. Then she adopted a steely look into her eyes as she marched out the front door and head towards the safe house, with a grinning Kenpachi Zaraki and a happy Yachiru Kusajishi following behind.

She was determined...Determined to give the child the life he should have had all along.

Chapter 3

Rukia checked the address on the slip of paper before nodding in affirmation. "This is it guys. Kenpachi? Watch your head."

They walked into the very nondescript looking house and Kenny, of course, slammed his head into the doorway. Yachiru peeked around him and took off, bouncing off the walls as she explored every nook and cranny. Rukia looked around at the interior as Kenpachi rubbed the top of his head, muttering about how he was going to murder the doorway. It was a decently sized place. It had two bathrooms, three potential bedrooms, and all the other rooms one would expect from a basic British household.

"I think this is a pretty nice place." Rukia said with a smile. "What do you think, Harry?" No response. Rukia looked down to see that the tiny little boy had fallen asleep in her arms. She smiled at his peaceful expression. 'I should get him to a bed.' Rukia thought as she headed towards the nearest bedroom. Yachiru was still bouncing around when Harry fell asleep, and it was starting to get on Rukia's nerves. She quickly put Harry in one of the beds and walked out to Yachiru. "Shut up, Yachiru! Harry is asleep." Yachiru looked at Rukia in suprise as the older soul reaper set about taking supply inventory. The little girl stared at the older soul reaper with a frown, her head tilted, then decided she'd rather see how Harry was doing. Sneakily, she tiptoed past the older woman as she was preoccupied with taking inventory, and made her way over to the room Harry was sleeping in.

Rukia had seen her out of the corner of her eye, and sighed. "Make sure you keep quiet, okay?" Yachiru stiffened when she realized she had been spotted, then turned to Rukia with a pout.

"Are you calling me noisy?"

"Yes." Rukia replied bluntly, not even looking up from her inventory.

"Oh...Well...Okay, I can't argue with that..." Yachiru said sheepishly, before slowly pushing the bedroom door open and tiptoeing inside. Yachiru saw Harry's sleeping form on the bed and tiptoed from the door to the side of Harry's bed. She watched as his torso rose and fell when he breathed. "Hi, Harry." She whispered. Harry did not wake. "My name's Yachiru." "I hope that we can become great friends." Yachiru told him as she smiled widely. "I've never actually...had a friend my own age before...Kenny's my only real friend." The girl admitted sheepishly. "The other soul reapers are too stuffy and boring for me. They are fun to mess with though, especially Baldy." Yachiru said, giggling a little from the nickname she gave Ikkaku. She climbed up onto the bed with Harry, grunting with extertion as she did so. When she finally made it up, she laid by his side and stared at his peaceful face. "Wow...You're happier already..." Yachiru said before yawning. "I shouldn't have eaten all that candy before coming here." Yachiru said, feeling a crash coming over her. "I'm gonna...take a little nap too...Kay...?" The little girl yawned, then passed out.

Rukia realized that she hadn't heard from Yachiru for a while. Worridly, she put down the inventory list and rushed to Harry's room. Peering inside, the sight she beheld almost sent her into a laughing fit. Yachiru was curled up on one of the pillows by Harry's head and had promptly fallen asleep. Kenpachi saw her silently shaking with laughter and raised an eyebrow. She gesture toward the door. The male soul reaper raised a brow, then peeked in the room to see the adorable sight.

"...Okay, and?" Rukia turned to him with a stunned expression on her face.

"What do you mean, AND?!" She whispered harshly before turning back to the two sleeping children with a huge smile. "They're so cute!"

"Sure, Rukia, whatever you say." Kenpachi shrugged. "I'm gonna see if I can find somewhere to train." Rukia scoffed as the man left.

"Sure, YOU wouldn't care..." She muttered under her breath before returning her gaze to the children. She smiled once more. "Aww..." Kenpachi rolled his eyes and walked away, muttering about murdering doors.

Yachiru's eyes fluttered open, and she found herself in an unfamiliar place. Out of it, she sat and looked around. Rukia was smiling down on her, and she looked to her left to see Harry sleeping next to her. The pink-haired little girl giggled.

"Oopsie! I guess I fell asleep!" Rukia chuckled.

"Yes, it's too bad you woke up. You two were SO CUTE!" The older soul reaper cleared her throat. "Listen, Yachiru, I know you want to get to know Harry better, but...why don't you go play? I'd...I'd like to speak with him privately when he wakes up, and let him know what's going on." Yachiru frowned, then smiled brightly.

"Okay! Tell me when I can say hi, 'kay?" Rukia smiled as the child ran from the room, then turned her attention to Harry. He was still sleeping... It would be a good time to ask Yamamoto about...becoming his permanent caretaker.

She reached into her pocket and pulled out her communicator and entered the number for the Head Captain.

The communicator picked up the captain. "Yes?" He said into the receiver.

"Sir, I would like to ask you something."

"Hmm? Go ahead Rukia, I'm listening."

She fidgeted, unsure how to ask this. "well, go on, before my beard gets any longer." Rukia cleared her throat, and began with, "WouldIbeallowedtostayandtakecareofHarry,sir?" The old man chuckled and told her, "Slow down girl, I couldn't understand one part of that word."

Rukia mentally kicked herself and said slowly, "Would I be allowed to say, stay here in Britain and take care of Harry, sir?" The old man was silent for a moment. Rukia was afraid he would say- "Yes."

"Wait what?"

"of course you can take care of him, but Zerichi and Yachiru will have to stay as well."

"Of course sir. Thank you sir."

"Yamato out"

Rukia sighed in relief and turned to Kenpachi, who had been standing there for a bit. "What was that about?"

"Weeellllll... we're staying here to take care of Harry." Kenpachi looked at her for a moment with a blank expression.

"...What." He said flatly. Rukia grinned.

"Yes! We're staying here to take care of Harry!"

"SERIOUSLY?! I HAVE TO BE STUCK IN THIS DAMN GIGAI BECAUSE SOME BRAT-"

"Hey, he's NOT a brat!" Rukia interrupted. "Please try to have a better attitude about this."

"I HAVE A GREAT ATTITUDE! I JUST HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN-" Rukia pressed her hands over his mouth.

"Shhhh! He's sleeping!" She hissed. "Look, we'll discuss this later. I'm going back to Harry's room. I want to be there when he wakes up."

"Tch. Whatever. Fine." Kenpachi scoffed, before turning away, muttering about going to inform Yachiru about the situation. She rolled her eyes at him then walked back into the room slowly making

her way to the side of Harry's bed. She looked down at the sleeping child, and her heart melted. Now that he was asleep and at peace, she could see just what a beautiful little boy he was. She surpressed a squeal of delight at the overwhelming cuteness that was Harry, and gently reached out to touch his cheek with her fingers. He smiled in his sleep and subconsciously leaned into the touch.

Rukia slowly grabbed him up and cuddled with him. He was just so cute!

Kenpachi groaned as he searched for Yachiru. "Oi! Yachiru! Where the heck are you?" He felt something move on his back and he sighed. "Listen Yachiru, it seems like we are going to be in these blasted Gigais for a while. We have to stay and protect that boy."

Yachiru gave a squeal of delight and ran in the direction of Harry's room.

"Ugh. Am I the only one who doesn't like this?"

Yachiru was eager to see her potential new playmate and all...but she skidded to a halt just in front of the door. Rukia DID say she wanted to be alone with Harry... Yachiru pouted, but decided that she'd respectfully fulfill the older soul reaper's wish. She could talk to Harry later. Then they could be best friends, and play together every day! Smiling in satisfaction at the thought, the little girl skipped cheerfully into the kitchen to explore a little more.

Rukia giggled and cooed as she gently rocked the little boy in her arms back and forth, melting at the huge smile on his face as she did so. She loved seeing him happy, and vowed to keep him as happy as she possibly could so she could see that smile more often. Her thoughts were interrupted by a soft yawn. Looking down, she saw Harry's emerald green eyes slowly opening.

Harry felt comfortable. It was warm and snug and... wait, what? He slowly opened his eyes to see that woman from before. Hnag on, this wasn't the Dursley's house. Where was he? How was Uncle

Vernon not here? Were these people with him? Harry's breathing became hitched as he began to hyperventilate rapidly.

Rukia's eyes widened as Harry panicked. Seeing him in such a fragile state awakened her maternal instincts, and she cradled him closer to her chest, gently rubbing the back of his head.

"Shhh...It's okay. You remember me, right?" Harry's breathing slowly calmed at the soothing gestures. Slowly, he looked up, into the eyes of the pretty woman who saved him, smiling down at him. He couldn't help but start to smile from seeing her. He forced the smile back, however. He wasn't supposed to smile...

"How are you doing?" Rukia said calmly, smiling all the while.

"Um...I...I'm okay..." He said softly.

"That's good." Rukia told him.

"What happened to my Aunt and Uncle?" asked Harry, wondering if they were about to come and take him away.

Rukia thought for a second before giving him the best answer, "Well, Mr. Kenny gave your uncle a nap, and your Aunt stayed to make sure he would get a good rest."

Harry was confused for a moment until he remembered the large, muscular man that was with her. "Does that mean that they will take me away from here? I don't want to leave! Please don't let them take me!" By now the child was hysterical. Rukia quickly reassured him saying, "Don't you worry about them, Mr. Kenny will take make sure they have directions back home so they don't take you."

"S-So...I'm not going back to my aunt and uncle?" Harry asked silently, a small glimmer of hope in his voice. Rukia smiled and rubbed his head.

"Not ever." She said softly. "You won't even see them again." Harry was overcome with a wave of relief.

"S-So...Are you still gonna hit me? I-I'm a freak...I deserve it..." Rukia looked at him sadly, mentally cursing the Dursleys.

"I would never hit you. You do not deserve to be hit." Rukia told him. The nature of the very thought of harming the little boy appalled her. "Why would I do such a thing?"

"I-I'm a freak. Freaks need to be beaten to get the freakishnes out of them." He said quietly.

"Why would anyone think that you were a freak? Trust me, I have met a lot of freaks in my er.. life, and your Uncle was definitely one of them. Why would you think that you were a freak?" she finished, stopping to take a breath.

He looked down sadly. "U-Uncle Vernon said-" Rukia placed a finger over Harry's mouth to quiet him, then placed both hands over his cheeks, making him look at her.

"He was wrong." She said in a matter-of-fact tone. "Don't listen to a word that sub-human being says. You are NOT a freak, and I'll NEVER hurt you. I promise." Then, with those words, she pulled him close in a tight embrace. Harry teared up slightly, but blinked the tears away. Freaks weren't allowed to cry.

"Wh-Why?"

"Why what, Harry?"

"Wh-Why do you c-care so much? M-My aunt and u-uncle told me that n-no one would ever c-care about a s-stupid, w-worthless, u-ugly f-freak..." He was sounding very close to tears by this point...

Rukia was shocked. What had they done to him? Takes his chin, "now you listen to me, I will never lay a finger on you. Do you hear

me? Never!" Harry burst into tears at this and clung to Rukia's uniform. Rukia wrapped her arms around Harry and held him in her arms while he cried in her chest. And let it out he did, for over an hour he cried into her until he couldn't cry anymore. And Rukia made no move to leave the entire time he cried, holding him as tightly as she could.

When he stopped crying, he let out a yawn, being completely drained emotionally. He looked up at Rukia with an expression of pure, wide-eyed adoration. Her heart melted as she kissed him on the forehead. The kiss was the moment Harry knew he could trust her. He threw himself into her bosom and hugged her as tightly as he could, snuggling up into her. He slowly fell asleep in her arms. He began to suck his tiny thumb as he had the first peaceful sleep he ever had. Rukia smiled as she held him for a few more minutes then tucked him into the bed.

His smile disappeared and was replaced with a frown, as if he was reacting to her not holding him. Thinking quickly, she kissed him on his forehead again, causing him to smile again. She placed a hand on his cheek and smiled warmly. "I'll protect you. I promise." Rukia whispered. She let out a soft yawn. Maybe she needed a nap too...

Deciding that she wanted to stay with Harry, she got under the covers with Harry and held him to her. She was fast asleep minutes later. Both woman and child smiled and held each other tightly.